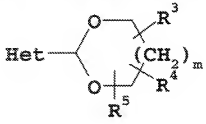
CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A compound of formula (I):



(I)

wherein:-

Het is a five or six membered heteroaromatic ring of the formula  in which

one of $R^1$ and $R^2$ is optionally substituted heteroaryl and the other is optionally substituted heteroaryl or optionally substituted aryl; $X^1$ is a bond, $X^3$ and $X^4$ are each independently N or C and $X^2$ and $X^5$ are independently CH, N, NH, O or S; or $X^3$ and $X^4$ are C, one of $X^1$, $X^2$ and $X^5$ is N and the others are N or CH; but excluding compounds in which $X^1$ is a bond, one of $X^2$ and $X^5$ is N and the other is NH and $X^3$ and $X^4$ are both C;

$R^3$ represents a group $-L^1-R^6$;

$R^4$ represents hydrogen, alkyl or hydroxyalkyl; or

$R^3$ and $R^4$, when attached to the same carbon atom, may form with the said carbon atom a cycloalkyl, cycloalkenyl or heterocycloalkyl ring or a group $C=CH_2$;

$R^5$ represents hydrogen or alkyl;

$R^6$ is hydrogen, alkyl, azido, hydroxy, alkoxy, aryl, arylalkyloxy, aryloxy, carboxy, [[(or)] an acid bioisostere selected from the group consisting of C(=O) NHOH, -C(=O)-$CH_2$OH, -C(=O)-$CH_2$SH, C(=O) NH-CN, sulpho, phosphono, alkylsulphonylcarbamoyl, tetrazolyl, arylsulphonylcarbamoyl, heteroarylsulphonylcarbamoyl, N methoxycarbamoyl, 3 hydroxy-3-cyclobutene-1,2-dione, 3,5-dioxo-1,2,4-oxadiazolidinyl, 3 hydroxyisoxazolyl and 3 hydoxy 1 methylpyrazolyl [(),)], cycloalkyl, cycloalkyloxy, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkyloxy, heteroaryloxy, heterocycloalkyl, heterocycloalkyloxy, nitro, $-NY^1Y^2$, $-N(R^7)-C(=Z)-R^8$, $-N(R^7)-C(=Z)-L^2-R^9$, $-NH-C(=Z)-NH-R^8$, $-NH-C(=Z)-NH-L^2-R^9$, $-N(R^7)-SO_2-R^8$, $-N(R^7)-SO_2-L^2-R^9$, $-S(O)_nR^{10}$, $-C(=Z)-NY^1Y^2$ or $-C(=Z)-OR^{10}$;

$R^7$ is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkyl, or heterocycloalkyl;

$R^8$ is alkyl, alkoxy, aryl, arylalkyloxy, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkyloxy or heterocycloalkyl;

$R^9$ is alkoxy, aryl, arylalkyloxy, arylalkyloxycarbonylamino, carboxy, an acid bioisostere selected from the group consisting of C(=O) NHOH, -C(=O)-$CH_2OH$, -C(=O)-$CH_2SH$, C(=O) NH-CN, sulpho, phosphono, alkylsulphonylcarbamoyl, tetrazolyl, arylsulphonylcarbamoyl, heteroarylsulphonylcarbamoyl, N methoxycarbamoyl, 3 hydroxy-3-cyclobutene-1,2-dione, 3,5-dioxo-1,2,4-oxadiazolidinyl, 3 hydroxyisoxazolyl and 3 hydoxy 1 methylpyrazolyl, ~~(or an acid bioisostere)~~, cycloalkyl, cyano, halo, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkoxy, heterocycloalkyl, hydroxy or -$NY^3Y^4$;

$R^{10}$ is alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkyl, or heterocycloalkyl;

$L^1$ represents a direct bond or a straight- or branched-chain alkylene linkage containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms and optionally substituted by halogen, hydroxy, alkoxy or oxo;

$L^2$ is a straight- or branched-chain alkylene linkage containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms;

$Y^1$ and $Y^2$ are independently hydrogen, alkenyl, alkynyl, aryl, cycloalkyl, heterocycloalkyl, heteroaryl or alkyl optionally substituted by alkoxy, aryl, cyano, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl, hydroxy, oxo, -$CO_2R^7$, -$CONY^3Y^4$ or -$NY^3Y^4$, or the group -$NY^1Y^2$ may form a 5-7 membered cyclic amine which (i) may be optionally substituted with one or more substituents selected from alkoxy, carboxamido, carboxy, hydroxy, oxo (or a 5, 6,or 7 membered cyclic acetal derivative thereof), alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl, heteroarylalkyl, or heterocycloalkyl or alkyl substituted by carboxy, carboxamido or hydroxy (ii) may also contain a further heteroatom selected from O, S, $SO_2$ or $NY^5$ and (iii) may also be fused to additional aryl, heteroaryl, heterocycloalkyl or cycloalkyl rings to form a bicyclic or tricyclic ring system;

$Y^3$ and $Y^4$ are independently hydrogen, alkenyl, alkyl, alkynyl, aryl, arylalkyl, cycloalkyl, heteroaryl or heteroarylalkyl, or the group -$NY^3Y^4$ may form a 5-7 membered cyclic amine as defined for -$NY^1Y^2$ above;

$Y^5$ is hydrogen, alkyl, aryl, arylalkyl, -C(=Z)$R^{10}$, -C(=Z)$OR^{10}$ or -$SO_2R^{10}$;

Z is an oxygen or sulphur atom;

m is zero or an integer 1 or 2; and

n is zero or an integer 1 or 2;

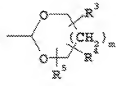
and an N-oxide ~~N-oxides~~ thereof, and an ester prodrug ~~their prodrugs~~; and a pharmaceutically acceptable salt and a hydrate of a compound of formula (I) and an N-oxide thereof, and its ester

~~prodrug, salts and solvates of compounds of formula (I) and N-oxides thereof, and their prodrugs.~~

2. (cancelled)

3. (previously presented) A compound according to Claim 1 in which Het is 

wherein $X^2$ and $X^5$ are independently CH, N, NH, O or S, and $X^3$ and $X^4$ independently are N or C, but excluding compounds in which one of $X^2$ and $X^5$ is N and the other is NH and $X^3$ and $X^4$ are both C.

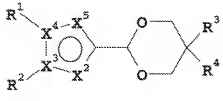
4. (previously presented) A compound according Claim 1 in which the ring  is  .

5. (previously presented) A compound according to Claim 1 in which one of $R^1$ and $R^2$ is 4-pyridyl and the other is 4-fluorophenyl.

6. (cancelled)

7. (cancelled)

8. (currently amended) A compound according to Claim 1 having the formula(Ib)



(Ib)

in which $R^3$, $R^4$, $X^2$, $X^3$, $X^4$ and $X^5$ are as defined defined in Claim 1, one of $R^1$ and $R^2$ is 4-pyridyl and the other is 4-fluorophenyl, an N-oxide thereof, and an ester prodrug; a

pharmacentically acceptable salt and a hydrate of a compound of formula (Ia) and an N-oxide thereof, and its ester prodrug. ~~and N-oxides thereof, and their prodrugs; and pharmaceutically acceptable salts and solvates of compounds of formula (Ib) and N-oxides thereof, and their prodrugs.~~

9. (cancelled)

10. (cancelled)

11. (previously presented) A compound according to Claim 1 in which $R^3$ and $R^4$ are both $C_{1-4}$alkyl groups.

12. (previously presented) A compound according to Claim 1 in which $R^3$ is $-C(=O)-NY^1Y^2$ (where $Y^1$ and $Y^2$ are as defined in Claim 1) and $R^4$ is $C_{1-4}$alkyl.

13. (previously presented) A compound according to Claim 12 in which $Y^1$ is hydrogen and $Y^2$ is alkyl or cycloalkyl.

14. (cancelled)

15. (previously presented) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound according to Claim 1 together with a phurmaceutically acceptable carrier or excipient.

16-20 (cancelled)